What is claimed is:

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1. A method for producing a cell line permissive for hepatitis C virus (HCV) replication comprising

- (a) culturing cells infected with HCV;
- (b) curing said cells of (a) of HCV; and
- (c) identifying a subline of said cured cells of (b) that is permissive for HCV replication.
- 2. The method of claim 1, wherein said curing step of (b) comprises subjecting said infected cells of (a) to treatment with an antiviral agent.
- 3. The method of claim 2, wherein said antiviral agent is an antiviral cytokine.
- 4. The method of claim 3, wherein said antiviral cytokine is interferon.
- 5. The method of claim 1, wherein said cells of (a) are vertebrate cells.
- 6. The method of claim 5, wherein said vertebrate cells are human cells.
- 7. The method of claim 1, wherein said cells of (a) are hepatocyte cells.
- 8. The method of claim 7, wherein said hepatocyte cells are human hepatocyte cells.
- 9. The method of claim 1 wherein said subline of (c) supports HCV replication at a frequency of at least 30%.
- 10. A method for producing a cell line permissive for HCV replication, the method comprising
- (a) providing a cell line that comprises a replicating genomic or subgenomic HCV RNA
- 5 (b) curing said cell line of (a) of HCV RNA

(c) identifying sublines of said cured cell line of (b) that are permissive for HCV replication.

- 11. The method of claim 10, wherein said curing of step (b) comprises treatment with an antiviral agent.
- 12. The method of claim 11, wherein said agent is an antiviral cytokine.
- 13. The method of claim 12, wherein said antiviral cytokine is interferon.
- 14. The method of claim 10 wherein said cell line of (a) comprises a replicating subgenomic HCV RNA containing no adaptive mutations.
- 15. The method of claim 10, wherein said cell line of (a) comprises a replicating subgenomic HCV RNA that comprises an adaptive mutation.
- 16. A cell line that is permissive for HCV replication, wherein said cell line is produced by curing a host cell line infected with HCV and then selecting cured sublines that are permissive for HCV replication.
- 17. A cell line according to claim 16, wherein said curing comprises treating said host cell line with interferon.
- 18. A cell line that is permissive for HCV RNA replication, wherein said cell line has been cured of HCV RNA by treatment with interferon.
- 19. A method for producing a cell line that is permissive for HCV RNA replication, the method comprising
 - (a) transfecting host cells with replicating HCV RNA
- (b) subjecting said host cells to conditions that cure said host cells of HCV 5 RNA
 - (c) selecting cured cell populations of (b)

(d) growing the selected cured cell populations of (c) to generate a cell line that is permissive for HCV RNA replication.

- 20. The method according to claim 19, wherein said HCV RNA of step (a) is subgenomic HCV RNA.
- 21. The method according to claim 19, wherein step (b) comprises treating said host cells with an antiviral agent.
- 22. The method of claim 21 wherein said antiviral agent is an antiviral cytokine.
- 23. The method according to claim 21, wherein said antiviral cytokine is interferon.
- 24. The method of claim 21, wherein said interferon is interferon-α.
- 25. The method according to claim 19, wherein said cell line of (d) supports HCV RNA replication at a frequency of between about 10% and about 75%.
- 26. The method according to claim 25, wherein said cell line of (d) supports HCV RNA replication at a frequency of between about 10% and about 30%.
- 27. The method according to claim 25, wherein said cell line of (d) supports HCV RNA replication at a frequency of at least 30%.
- 28. The method according to claim 27, wherein said cell line of (d) supports HCV RNA replication at a frequency of at least 50%.
- 29. The method according to claim 19, wherein said host cell is a vertebrate cell.
- 30. The method according to claim 29, wherein said host cell is a human cell.
- 31. The method according to claim 29, wherein said host cell is a hepatocyte cell.

32. The method according to claim 30, wherein said host cell is a human cell.

- 33. A cell line produced by the method of claim 19.
- 34. A cell line according to claim 33, wherein said host cell contains subgenomic HCV RNA.
- 35. A cell line according to claim 34, wherein said subgenomic HCV RNA comprises an adaptive mutation.
- 36. The cell line of claim 35, wherein said adaptive mutation is S2204I, said position being identified by alignment with the genotype 1b Con1 full-length HCV genome (Genbank Accession no. AJ238799) commencing with the core-coding region.
- 37. A cell line produced by the method of claim 1.
- 38. A cell line produced by the method of claim 10.